

REMARKS

Status of Claims

Claims 2-6, 8-23 and 25-28 are pending in this application, of which claims 25-27 have been withdrawn. Claims 2 and 28 are independent.

Claims 2, 8, 10, 23 and 28 have been amended to correct informalities and clearly define the present subject matter. Claims 2 and 28 have been amended to incorporate the subject matter of original claim 7 and additional subject matter. Accordingly, claim 7 has been cancelled without prejudice. Support for the amendment is found, for example, at page 10, line 15 of the specification. Care has been exercised not to introduce new matter.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 2-4, 6, 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,772,303) in view of Ito et al. (JP 2002-249332). Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Roba in view of DiGiovanni et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,966,201). Claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Ito in view of Barns et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,842,626). Claims 9 and 11-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Ito in view of Onishi et al. (Derwent Abstract of JP 08-067524). Claims 10 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Ito in view of Kunio (JP 62-226829). Claim 14 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Ito in view of Homa et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2003/01213268). Claim 16 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Ito in view of Chang et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0194877). Claims 17-20 were rejected under 35

U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya et al. and Ito in view of Homa and Yokota et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,793,842). Claims 21 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya and Ito in view of DiGiovanni. Claim 28 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya in view of Ito. These rejections are traversed for at least the following reasons.

Applicants respectfully submit that, at a minimum, none of the cited references discloses or suggests the use of “*an inert gas containing hydrogen atom-containing substances at a concentration of 10 vol. ppm or less*” in the drying step, as recited by amended claims 2 and 28. In rejecting original claim 7, the Examiner concedes that Kamiya fail to disclose the specific content of the drying gas used. The Examiner relies on Barns, asserting that Barns discloses the drying of the inside of a glass tube by utilizing a gas containing less than 10 ppm hydrogen atom-containing substances.

Applicants respectfully submit that Barns fails to disclose the use of an *inert* gas containing hydrogen atom-containing substances at a concentration of 10 vol. ppm or less. Barns disclose the use of carbon tetra halide carried by oxygen gas as a drying gas. However, Barns fails to disclose the use of inert gas. It should be noted that the use of oxygen as a carrier gas is essential in Barns (see, col. 4, lines 2-6 of Barns). As such, it is clear that Barns fails to disclose the use of an inert gas containing hydrogen atom-containing substances, as recited by amended claims 2 and 28. It is also clear that the remaining cited references do not cure the deficiency of Barns, and it would not have been obvious to add this feature to any combination of the cited references.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that it would not have been obvious to combine Barns with Kamiya. In the dehumidifying process of Kamiya, the quartz tube is sealed and

evacuated by a suction pump while heating the tube (see, col. 3, lines 16-22 of Kamiya) thereby eliminating necessity of regulating the inner pressure of the quart tube (see, col. 3, lines 26-28 of Kamiya). It is noted that no gas is used in Kamiya during the alleged drying process.

Accordingly, if the gas of Barns was utilized during the drying process of Kamiya, it would make the Kamiya's process and device inoperable, and thus it would not have been obvious to combine Barns with Kamiya.

Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2 and 28 and all claims dependent thereon are patentable over the cited references. Thus, it is requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejections of claims 2-6, 8-23 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Conclusion

Having fully responded to all matters raised in the Office Action, Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance, an indication for which is respectfully solicited. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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